

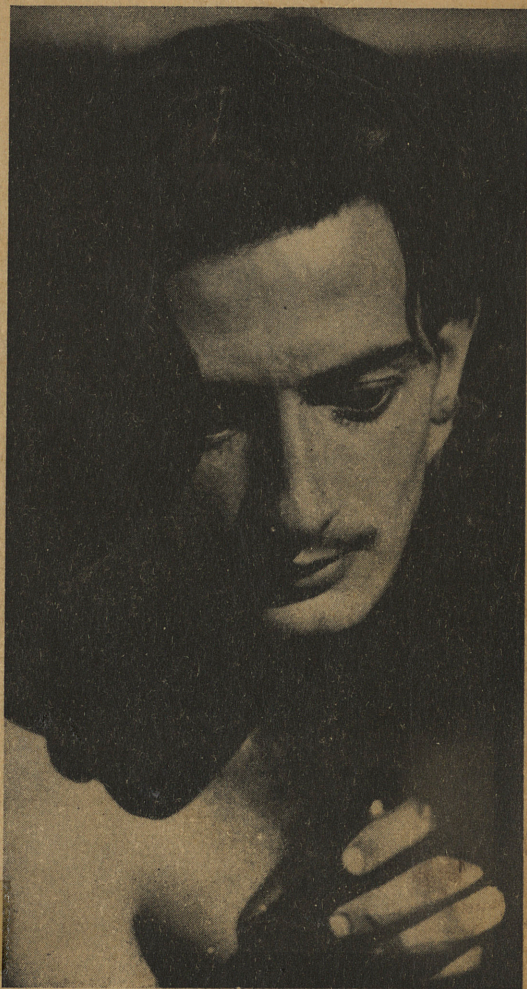
SALVADOR  
DALI

CONQUEST

OF THE

IRRATIONAL

35 photographic  
reproductions and an  
hors-texte in colours



JULIEN LEVY, PUBLISHER











CONQUEST  
OF THE  
IRRATIONAL

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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THE VISIBLE WOMAN, 1930.

LOVE AND THE MEMORY, 1931.

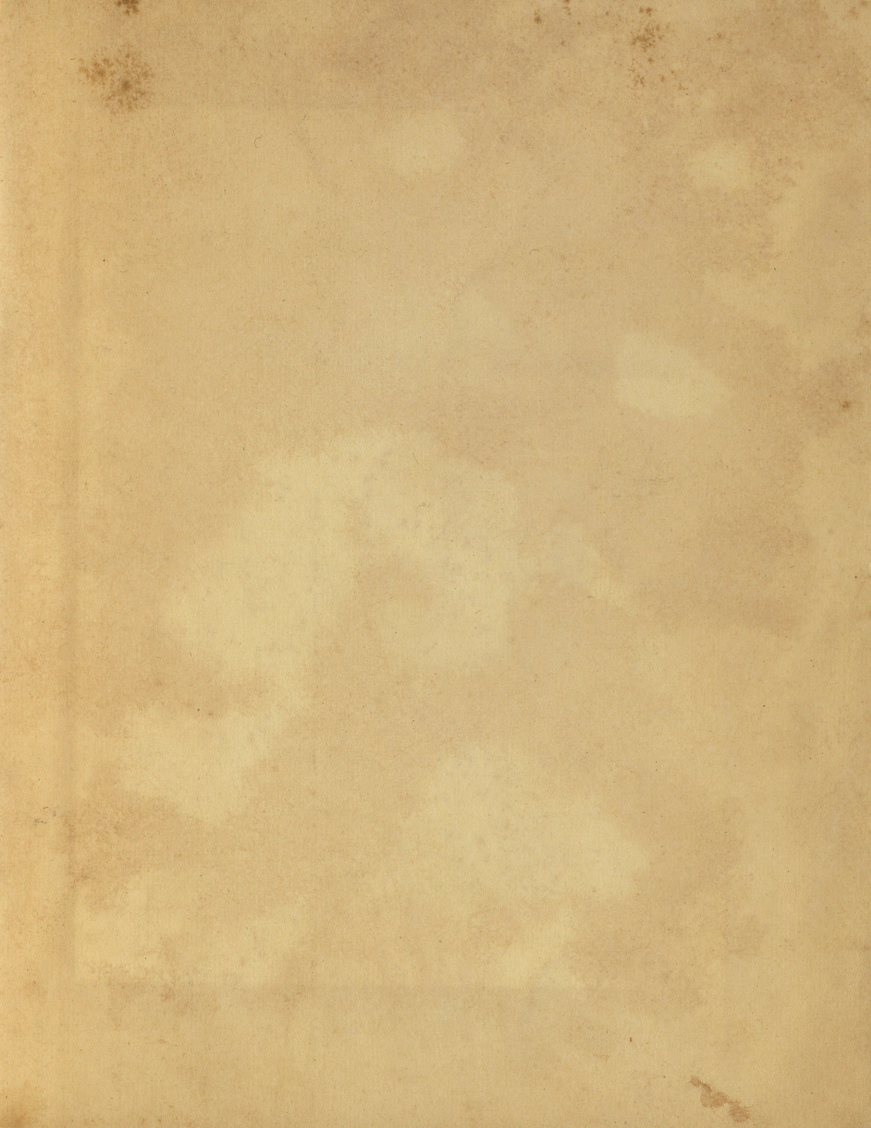
BABAOUO, *scenario preceded by a* BRIEF CRITICAL HISTORY  
OF THE CINEMA, 1932.

TO APPEAR

I EAT GALA, *poem.*

THE TRAGIC MYTH OF THE ANGELUS ON MILLET, *essay.*









SALVADOR DALI

CONQUEST  
OF  
THE  
IRRATIONAL

with

35 photographic reproductions  
and an hors-texte in colours

JULIEN LEVY, PUBLISHER  
NEW-YORK

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# SALVADOR DALI

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*Dali has endowed surrealism with an instrument of primary importance, in particular the paranoiac-critical method, which has immediately shown itself capable of being applied equally to painting, poetry, the cinema, to the construction of typical surrealist objects, to fashion, to sculpture, to the history of art and even, if necessary, to all manner of exegesis.*

André BRETON.

(In a lecture given at Brussels,  
June 1934.)

## THE WATERS IN WHICH WE SWIM

**I**T is known that the brilliant and sensational progress of the particular sciences, glory and honour of the "space" and time in which we live, entails, on the one hand, the crisis and overwhelming discredit of "logical intuition", and, on the other hand, the consideration of irrational factors and hierarchies as new positive and specifically productive values. Everyone will recall that logical and pure intuition, that pure intuition, I repeat, pure maid-of-all-work, good-for-everything, in the particular houses of the particular sciences, carried for a long time in her belly an illegitimate son who was none other than physics itself, and

that this son, at the time of Maxwell and Faraday, was already perceptibly heavy with a non-equivocal persuasion and a personal force of gravity that no longer left any doubt as to the Newtonian paternity of the child. It is on account of this downward tendency and the force of gravity of these circumstances that pure intuition, continually being shown to the doors of the particular sciences' houses, ends up by becoming in our time pure prostitution, for we see her surrendering her last charms and her last turbulences in the *maison publique* of the artistic and literary world.

It is under such cultural circumstances that our contemporaries, systematically cretinised by the mechanicism and the architecture of auto-punition, by psychological bureaucratic congratulations, by ideological disorder and imaginative fasting, by affective paternal hungers of all kinds, seek in vain to bite into the doting and triumphal sweetness of the plump, atavistic, tender, militarist and territorial back of some hitlerian nurse, in order at last to be able, no matter how, to communicate with the totemic consecrated host that has just been elevated in front of their own noses and which, as is known and understood, was nothing else than the spiritual and symbolic nourishment that catholicism offered during the centuries to appease the cannibal frenzy of moral and irrational hungers. For in effect the irrational hunger of our contemporaries is confronted by a cultural dining-table



upon which there are only, on the one hand, the cold and unsubstantial remains of art and literature, and, on the other, the burning analytical precisions of the particular sciences, inaccessible, for the moment, to a nutritious synthesis because of their inordinate extension and specialisation and, in any case, totally unassimilable, except in cases of speculative cannibalism.

From all that is born the colossal, nutritive and cultural responsibility of surrealism, a responsibility which becomes more and more objective, consuming and exclusivist with each new cataclysm of collective hunger, with each new gluttonous, glutinous, ignominious and sublime bite of the terrible jaw of the masses into the congested, bleeding and par excellence biological cutlet which constitutes the political system.

It is in such circumstances that Salvador Dali, the precise apparatus of hand-done paranoiac-critical activity, less ready than ever to desert his uncompromising cultural post, has for a long while been proposing that it might also be desirable to eat the surrealists, for we, surrealists, we are the kind of good-quality, decadent, stimulating, extravagant and ambivilant food which, in the most tactful and intelligent fashion in the world, belongs to the faisandé, paradoxical and succulently truculent state which is proper to and characteristic of the atmosphere of ideological and moral confusion in which we have the honour and the pleasure

to live at this moment. For we, surrealists, as you may be convinced by paying a little attention to us, we are not exactly artists and we are not exactly men of science; we are caviar, and caviar, believe me, is true extravagance and intelligence of taste, above all in concrete moments like the present moment, in which the irrational hunger that I am speaking to you about, though incommensurable, impatient and imperialist, finds itself so exasperated by the salivary anticipations of waiting that, in order to reach progressively its next glorious conquests, it is necessary for it to swallow, to begin with, the fine, intoxicating and dialectical grape of the caviar, without which the thick and stifling food of the next ideologies would threaten to paralyze as soon as it began the vital and philosophic rage of the historic belly. For, if caviar is the vital experience of the sturgeon, it is also that of the surrealists, for, like it, we are carnivorous fish who, as I have already insinuated, are swimming between two kinds of water, the cold water of art and the warm water of science, and it is precisely in this temperature and swimming against the current that the experience of our life and of our fecundation attains that agitated profundity, that irrational and moral hyper-lucidity which is only produced in this climate of neronian osmósis brought about by the living and continual fusion of sole's thickness and crowned heat, of the satisfaction of sole's circumcision and sheet-iron, of



territorial ambivalence and agricultural patience, of acute collectionism and propped-up cap-peaks, of white's letters on the old billiard-table cushions and white's letters on the old pirate bands<sup>1</sup>, of all sorts of tepid and dermatological elements which preside over the notion of the "imponderable", simulacrum-notion unanimously recognized as existing simply to serve as epithet to the unrestrainable taste for caviar, and also simulacrum-notion which already conceals the timid and gustatory germs of the concrete irrationality which, being only the apotheosis and paroxysm of this imponderable objective, brought about by the exactitude and the divisionist precision of the caviar of the imagination, will constitute in an exclusivist and moreover philosophic fashion the terribly demoralising and terribly complicated result of my experiences and discoveries in the pictorial domain.

For one thing is certain : I hate simplicity in all its forms.

## MY PICTORIAL STRUGGLE

**I**T seems to me perfectly obvious when my enemies, my friends and the public in general pretend not to understand the meaning of the images that arise and that I transcribe in my pictures. How can you expect them to understand them when I myself, who am their "maker", understand them

as little? The fact that I myself, at the moment of painting, do not understand my own pictures, does not mean that these pictures have no meaning; on the contrary, their meaning is so profound, complex, coherent and involuntary that it escapes the most simple analysis of logical intuition. To describe my pictures in everyday language, to explain them, it is necessary to submit them to special analyses and preferably with the most ambitiously objective scientific rigour possible. Then all explanation arises *a posteriori*, once the picture already exists as phenomenon.

My whole ambition in the pictorial domain is to materialise the images of concrete irrationality with the most imperialist fury of precision. — In order that the world of the imagination and of concrete irrationality may be as objectively evident, of the same consistency, of the same durability, of the same persuasive, cognoscitive and communicable thickness as that of the exterior world of phenomenal reality. — The important thing is what one wishes to communicate: the concrete irrational subject. — The means of pictorial expression are placed at the service of this subject. — The illusionism of the most abjectly *arriviste* and irresistible imitative art, the usual paralysing tricks of *trompe-l'œil*, the most analytically narrative and discredited academicism, can all become sublime hierarchies of thought and the means of approach to new exactitudes of concrete irrationality. — In the



degree that the images of concrete irrationality approach phenomenal reality the corresponding means of expression approach those of the great realist painters — Velasquez and Vermeer of Delft — to paint realistically according to irrational thought, according to the unknown imagination. — Instantaneous and hand-done colour photography of the superfine, extravagant, extra-plastic, extra-pictorial, unexplored, super-pictorial, super-plastic, deceptive, hyper-normal and sickly images of concrete irrationality : images which provisionally are neither explicable nor reducible by the systems of logical intuition or by the rational mechanisms. The images of concrete irrationality are thus authentically unknown images. — Surrealism in its first period offered specific methods for approaching the images of concrete irrationality. — These methods, based on the exclusively passive and receptive role of the surrealist subject, are now in liquidation and giving place to new surrealist methods of systematic exploration of the irrational. — Pure psychic automatism, dreams, experimental dreaming, surrealist objects functioning symbolically, instinctive ideographism, phosphenomenal and hypnagogic irritation, do not seem to us to-day to be evolutionary processes. — Moreover, the images obtained by these processes offer two grave inconveniences. 1) They cease to be unknown images, for in falling into the domain of psycho-analysis they are easily reduced to ordinary logical language, though they

still continue to offer an uninterpretable residue and an authentic and very vast margin of enigma, especially to the great public. 2) Their essentially virtual and chimeric character no longer satisfies our "principles of verification", announced for the first time by André Breton in the *Discourse on the Dearth of Reality*. — Since then the delirious images of surrealism have been tending desperately towards their own tangible possibility, towards their objective and physical existence in reality. Only those who ignore this fact can still swim in the gross equivocation of "poetic evasion" and continue to believe us to be mystics of fantasy and fanatics of the marvellous. Personally, I believe that the period of inaccessible mutilations, of unrealisable sanguinary osmoses, of loose visceral torn holes, of rocks'-hair and catastrophic emigrations, is experimentally closed, although it may very probably continue to constitute the exclusive iconography of a large period of painting provoked by surrealism. The new delirious images of concrete irrationality tend towards their physical and actual "possibility"; they surpass the domain of phantasms and "virtual", psycho-analysable representations.

They present the evolutionary and productive appearance characteristic of systematic fact. The essays in simulation of Eluard and Breton, Breton's recent poem-objects, the latest images of René Magritte, the "method" of the latest sculpture of Picasso and the theoretic and pictorial activity of



Salvador Dali prove this need of concrete materialisation in current reality, of giving objective value on the real plane to the delirious unknown world of our irrational experiences. Against the remembrance of dreams and the virtual and impossible images of purely receptive states, "that can only be recounted", there are the physical facts of "objective" irrationality, with which one can already actually wound oneself. It was in 1929 that Salvador Dali brought his attention to bear upon the internal mechanism of paranoiac phenomena and envisaged the possibility of an experimental method based on the sudden power of the systematic associations proper to paranoia; this method afterwards became the delirio-critical synthesis which bears the name of "paranoiac-critical activity". Paranoia: delirium of interpretive association bearing a systematic structure. *Paranoiac-critical activity: spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based upon the interpretive-critical association of delirious phenomena.* The presence of active and systematic elements does not suppose the idea of voluntarily directed thought, nor of any intellectual compromise, for, as we know, in paranoia the active and systematic structure is consubstantial with the delirious phenomenon itself; — all delirious phenomena of paranoiac character, even when sudden and instantaneous, bears already "in entirety" the systematic structure and only becomes objective *a posteriori* by critical

intervention. Critical activity intervenes solely as liquid revealer of images, associations and systematic coherences and *finesses* already existing at the moment when delirious instantaneousness is produced and that alone, for the moment to this degree of tangible reality, are given an objective light by paranoiac-critical activity. Paranoiac-critical activity is an organizing and productive force of objective chance. Paranoiac-critical activity no longer considers surrealist phenomena and images by themselves but, on the contrary, as a coherent whole of systematic and significant relations. Against the passive, disinterested, contemplative and aesthetic attitude of irrational phenomena there is the active, systematic, organizing and cognoscitive attitude of irrational phenomena considered as associative, partial and significant events in the authentic domain of our immediate and practical experience of life.

It is a question of the systematic and interpretive organization of the sensational, scattered and narcissist surrealist experimental material, — that is to say, of everyday surrealist events : nocturnal pollution, false recollection, dream, diurnal fantasy, the concrete transformation of nocturnal phosphene into a hypnagogic image or of "waking phosphene" into an objective image, — the nutritive caprice, — inter-uterine claims, — anamorphic hysteria, — the voluntary retention of the urine, — the involuntary retention of insomnia,



— the fortuitous image of exclusively exhibitionist tendency, — the incomplete action, — the frantic manner, — the regional sneeze, the anal wheelbarrow, the minimal mistake, the liliputian malaise, the super-normal physiological state, — the picture one leaves off painting, that which one paints, the territorial ringing of the telephone, “the deranging image”, etc., etc., all these things, I say, and a thousand other instantaneous or successive sollicitations, revealing a minimum of irrational intentionality or, on the contrary, a minimum of suspect phenomenal nullity, are associated, by the mechanisms of paranoiac-critical activity, in an indestructible delirious-interpretive system of political problems, paralytic images, more or less mammi-ferous questions, playing the role of the obsessing idea.

Paranoiac-critical activity organizes and objectivizes in an exclusivist manner the limitless and unknown possibilities of the systematic association of subjective and objective phenomena, which appear to us as irrational sollicitations, exclusively in favour of the obsessing idea. By this method paranoiac-critical activity discovers new and objective “significances” in the irrational; it makes the world of delirium pass tangibly onto the plane of reality.

Paranoiac phenomena : common images having a double figuration; — the figuration can theoretically and practically be multiplied; — everything

depends upon the paranoiac capacity of the author. The basis of associative mechanisms and the renewing of obsessing ideas allows, as is the case in a recent picture by Salvador Dali now being elaborated, six simultaneous images to be represented without any one of them undergoing the least figurative deformation : — athlete's torso, lion's head, general's head, horse, shepherdess's bust, death's head. — Different spectators see in this picture different images; needless to say that it is carried out with scrupulous realism. — Example of paranoiac-critical activity : Salvador' Dali's next book, *The Tragic Myth of Millet's Angelus*, in which the method known as paranoiac-critical activity is applied to the delirious fact which constitutes the obsessional character of Millet's Angelus. Thus the history of art in particular is to be rewritten according to the method of "paranoiac-critical activity"; according to this method pictures as apparently different as the *Giaconda*, Millet's *Angelus* and the *Embarkment for Cytheria* by Watteau would represent exactly the same subject, would mean exactly the same thing.



## THE ABJECT MISERY OF ABSTRACTION-CREATION

THE disgraceful lack of philosophic and general culture of the gay propellers of this model mental debility called abstract art, abstraction-creation, non-figurative art, etc., is one of the things which are authentically sweetest from the point of view of the intellectual and "modern" desolation of our epoch. Sticky and retarded Kantians of scatological *sections d'or*, they continue to want to offer us upon the fresh optimism of their shiny paper the soup of the abstract aesthetic, which really and truly is even worse than the cold and colossally sordid vermicelli soups of neo-thomism, which even the most convulsively hungry cats would not go near. If, according to them, forms and colours have an aesthetic value in themselves, apart from their representative value and their anecdotal significance, how can they resolve and explain the classic paranoiac image with double and simultaneous figuration, which can offer without any difficulty an image that is, from their point of view, strictly imitative and inefficacious, and at the same time, without anything being changed, a plastically rich and valuable image? Such is the case with the minute ultra-anecdotal little figure of a vivid prone negro-boy in the style of Meissonnier, which

at the same time, if one looks at it vertically, is nothing less than the rich and even plastically succulent shadow of a pompeian nose, very respectable on account of its degree of abstraction-creation! Moreover, the experience of Picasso's genius only goes to prove to them the conditional, material, ineluctable and apotheotic (in relation to the physical and geometrical precisions of aesthetic systems) character of the biological and feverish systems of the concrete object. For (and, since I am feeling inspired, allow me to speak to you in verse) :

the biological and dramatic  
phenomenon  
which constitutes the cubism  
of  
Picasso  
was

the first great imaginative cannibalism surpassing the  
experimental ambition of modern mathematical physics



the life of Picasso  
will form the polemic basis  
as yet misunderstood  
according to which  
physical psychology  
will open up anew  
a niche of living flesh  
and of darkness  
for philosophy





For because  
of the materialist  
anarchist  
and systematic thought  
of  
Picasso  
we shall be able to know physically  
experimentally  
and without need  
of new psychological "problematics"  
of Kantian savour  
of the gestaltists  
all the misery  
of  
localised and comfortable  
objects of consciousness  
with their lazy atoms  
sensations infinite  
and diplomatic.



For the hyper-materialist thought  
of  
Picasso  
proves  
that the cannibalism of the race  
devours  
"the intellectual species"  
that the regional wine  
already moistens  
the family trouser-flap

of the phenomenologist mathematics  
of  
the future  
that there exist extra-psychological  
"strict appearances"  
intermediary  
between  
imaginative grease  
and  
monetary idealisms  
between  
passed-over arithmetics  
and sanguinary mathematics  
between the "structural entity"  
of an "obsessing sole"  
and the conduct of living beings  
in contact with "the obsessing sole"  
for the sole in question  
remains  
totally exterior  
to the comprehension  
of  
the  
gestalt-theory  
since  
this theory of the strict  
appearance  
and of the structure  
does not possess  
physical means  
permitting  
analysis  
nor even  
the registration  
of human behaviour  
vis-à-vis



with structures  
and appearances  
presenting themselves  
objectively  
as  
Physically delitions  
for  
there does not exist  
in our time  
as far as I know  
a physics  
of psycho-pathology  
a physics of paranoia  
which can only be considered  
as  
the experimental basis  
of the coming philosophy  
of  
psycho-pathology  
of the coming  
philosophy of « Paranoiac-critical » activity  
which one day  
I shall try to envisage polemically  
if I have the time  
and the inclination.

## THE TEARS OF HERACLITUS

**T**HERE exists a perpetual and synchronic physical materialisation of the great simulacrum of thought, in the sense in which Heraclitus already understood it when he wept intelligently and with warm tears for the auto-pudency of nature. The Greeks realised it when they transformed the obscure and turbulent passions of man into clear, analytical and carnal anatomy in their statuary, when sculpting their psychological gods. —Today the new geometry of thought is physics, and if space, as Euclid understood it, was nothing more to the Greeks than a very distant abstraction, inaccessible still to the timid three-dimensional continuum that Descartes was to announce later, in our time space has become, as you know, that terribly material, terribly personal and significant physical thing which weighs us all down like authentic *comedons*. If the Greeks, as I have already said above, materialised their psychology and their euclidian sentiments in the muscular, nostalgic and divine clarity of their sculpture, Salvador Dali, in 1935, is no longer content to make auto-amorphism for you out of the agonising and colossal question which is that of einsteinian space-time, he is no longer content to make libidinous arithmetic of it for you, no longer content, I repeat, to make flesh of it for you,



he is making you cheese of it, for he persuaded that Salvador Dali's famous flabby watches are nothing else than the tender, extravagant and solitary paranoiac-critical camembert of time and space.

To finish with, I should excuse myself, before the authentic hunger which, I suppose, is honouring my readers, for having commenced this theoretic meal, which one might have expected to be savage and cannibal, with the civilised imponderability of caviar, and for having finished it with this other and still more intoxicating and deliquescent imponderableness of camembert. Believe nothing of it, behind these two superfine simulacrum of imponderability is hiding, in better and better condition, the very well-known, sanguinary and irrational grilled cutlet which shall eat us all.

SALVADOR DALI.

*(Translated by David Gascoyne.)*





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PL. 3. - *The Illuminated Pleasures*, 1929, coll. Sydney Janis, New York.  
PL. 4. - *The Invisible Man* (unfinished), 1930.  
PL. 5. - *The Dream*, 1931, coll. Vicomte de Noailles, Paris.  
PL. 6. - *Surrealist Object Indicating Instantaneous Memory*, 1932.  
PL. 7. - *Paranoiac Metamorphosis of Gala's Face* (drawing), 1932, col. Kochno, Paris.  
PL. 8. - *Persistence of Memory*, 1932. Museum of Modern Art, New York.  
PL. 9. - *Memory of the Child-Woman*, 1932, coll. Keller, Paris.  
PL. 10. - *Myself, ten years old, when I was a Grasshopper-Child*, 1933, coll. Cornell, New York.  
PL. 11. - *The Enigma of William Tell*, 1934.  
PL. 12. - *The Invisible, Fine and Average Harp*, 1933, coll. Vicomte de Noailles.  
PL. 13. - *Average Atmospheroccephalic Bureaucrat in the Act of Milking a Cranial Harp*, 1933.

- PL. 14. - *Portrait of Gala with two Cutlets Balanced on her Shoulder*, 1934.
- PL. 15. - *Automatic Beginning of Portraits of Gala* (unfinished), 1932.
- PL. 16. - *Apparition on the Beach at Rosas*, 1934, coll. Fabre-Luce, Paris.
- PL. 17. - *The Ghost of Vermeer of Delft, which can be used as a table*, 1934, coll. Thrall Soby, Hartford.
- PL. 18. - *Portrait of Emilio Terry*, 1934, coll. Emilio Terry, Paris.
- PL. 19. - *Portrait of Emilio Terry* (detail), 1934, coll. Emilio Terry, Paris.
- PL. 20. - *Atmospheric Skull Sodomizing a Grand Piano*, 1934, coll. Lise Deharme.
- PL. 21. - *Atmospheric Skull Sodomizing a Grand Piano* (detail), coll. Lise Deharme.
- PL. 22. - *Hysterical and Aerodynamic Feminine Nude* (sculpture), 1934.
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- PL. 24. - *Retrospective Bust of a Woman* (sculpture-object), 1933.
- PL. 25. - *Surrealist Object Functioning Symbolically*, 1932.
- PL. 26. - *The Lugubrious Game*, 1929, coll. Vicomte de Noailles, Paris.
- PL. 27. - *Truculent Cover*, 1934.



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1933, coll. Georges Levy, Paris.
- PL. 29. - *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition*,  
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- PL. 30. - *The Paranoiac Face*, 1935, coll. Edward  
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- PL. 31. - *Paranoiac-critical Solitude*, 1935, coll.  
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- PL. 32. - *Cardinal, Cardinal !* 1934, coll. Stanley  
Resor, New York.
- PL. 33. - *Vertigo*, 1932, coll. Prince de Faucigny  
Lucinge.

*The Angelus of Gala*, (hors-texte in colours), 1935,  
private collection, New York.

ERRATUM. — The paging of the horizontal plates (3, 8, 9, 11,  
14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 31; 32) has been incorrectly  
indicated.

Only plate 30 can be looked at both horizontally and verti-  
cally.

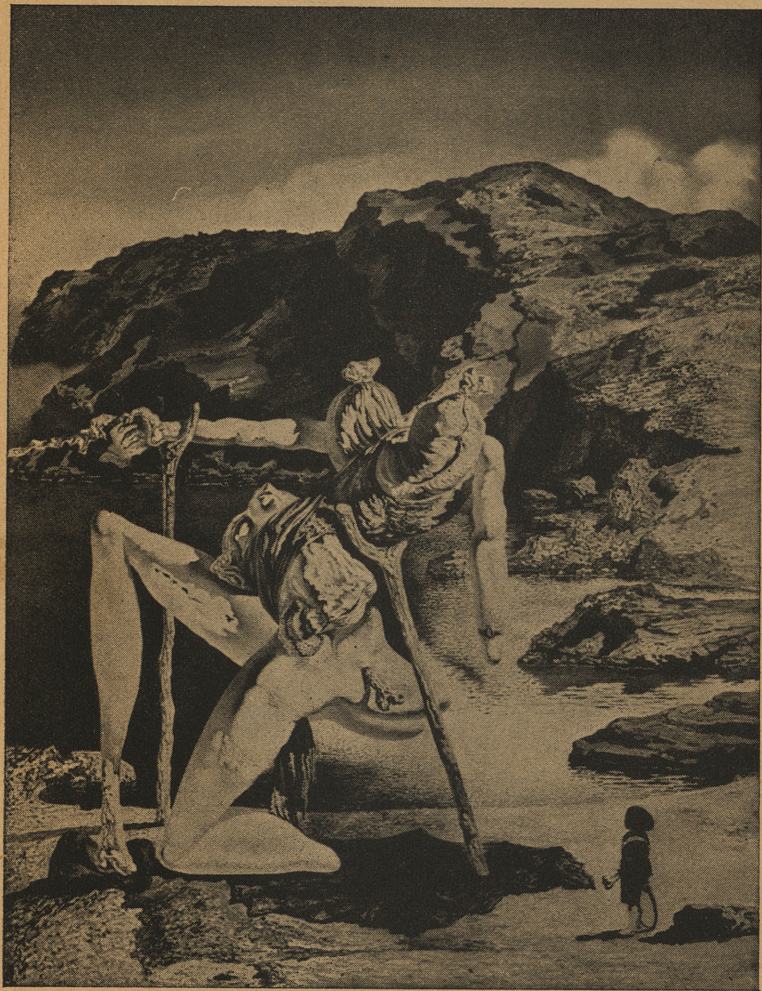




# PLATES







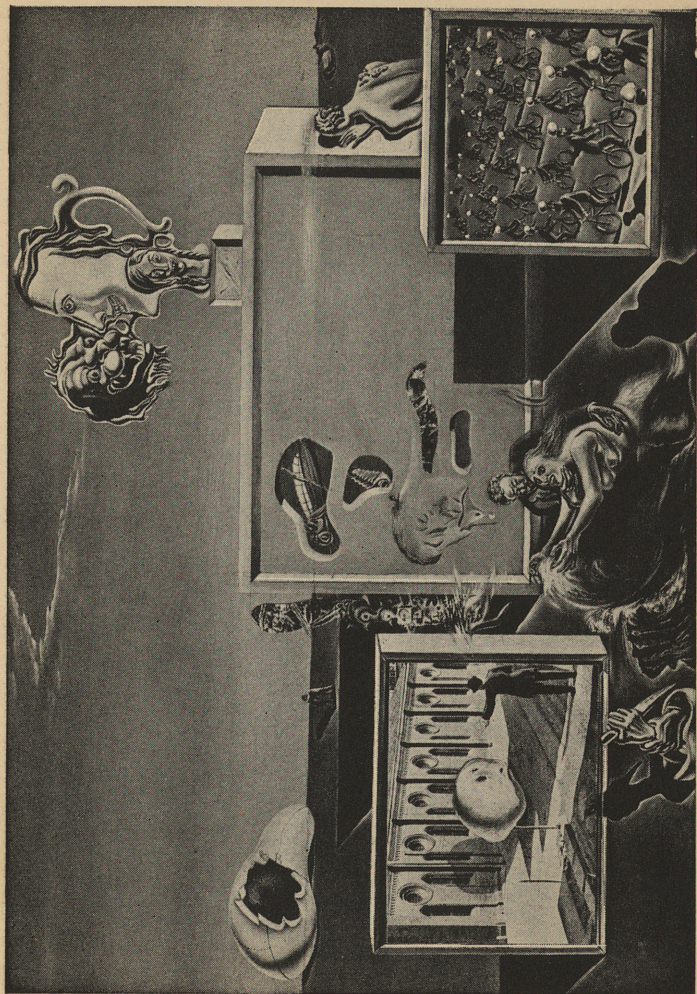
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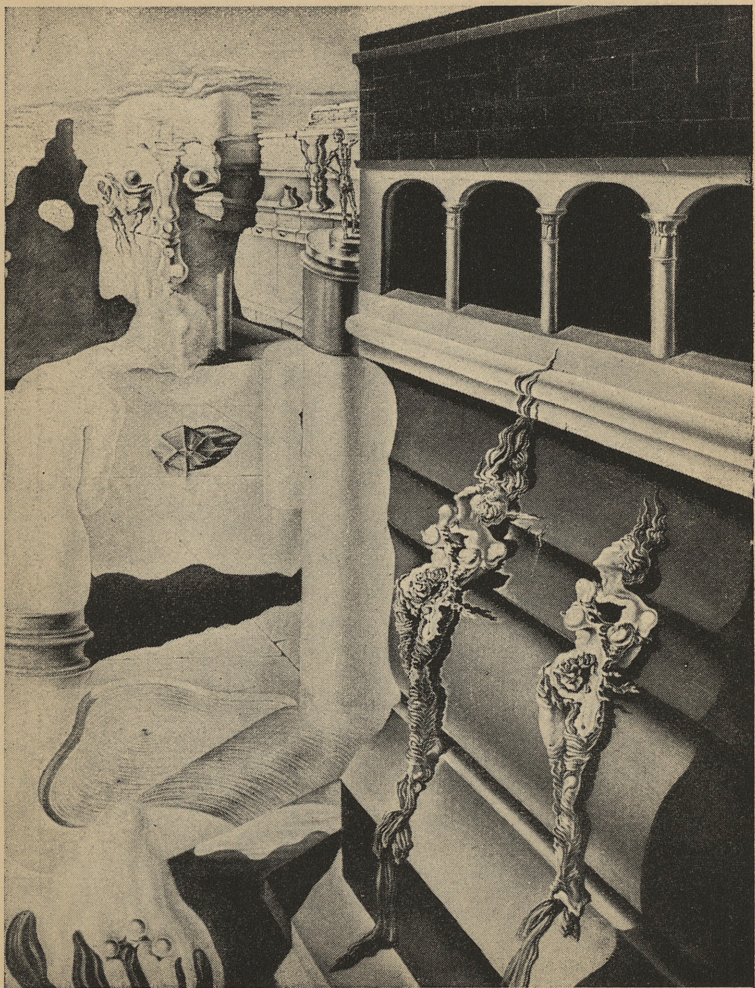


PL. 2.







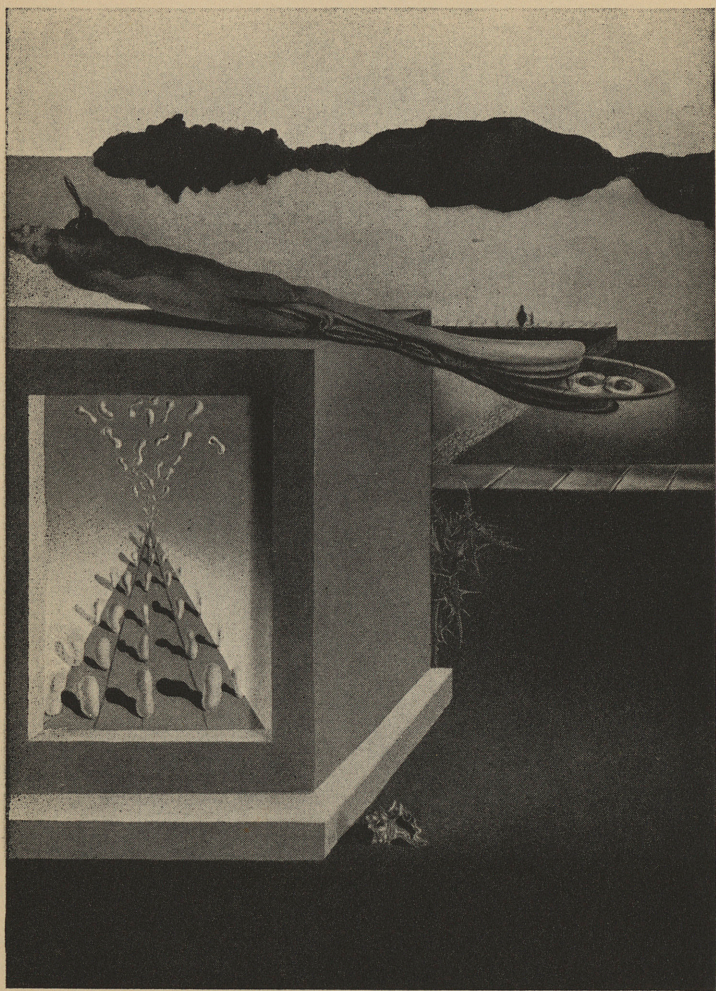


PL. 4.





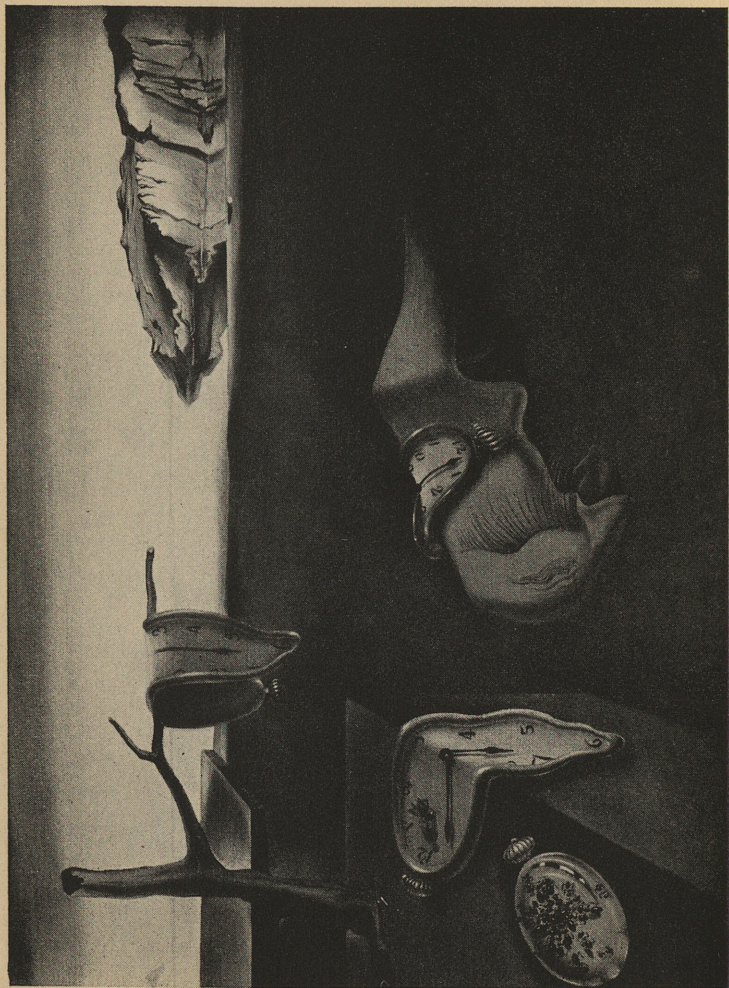
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PL. 6.

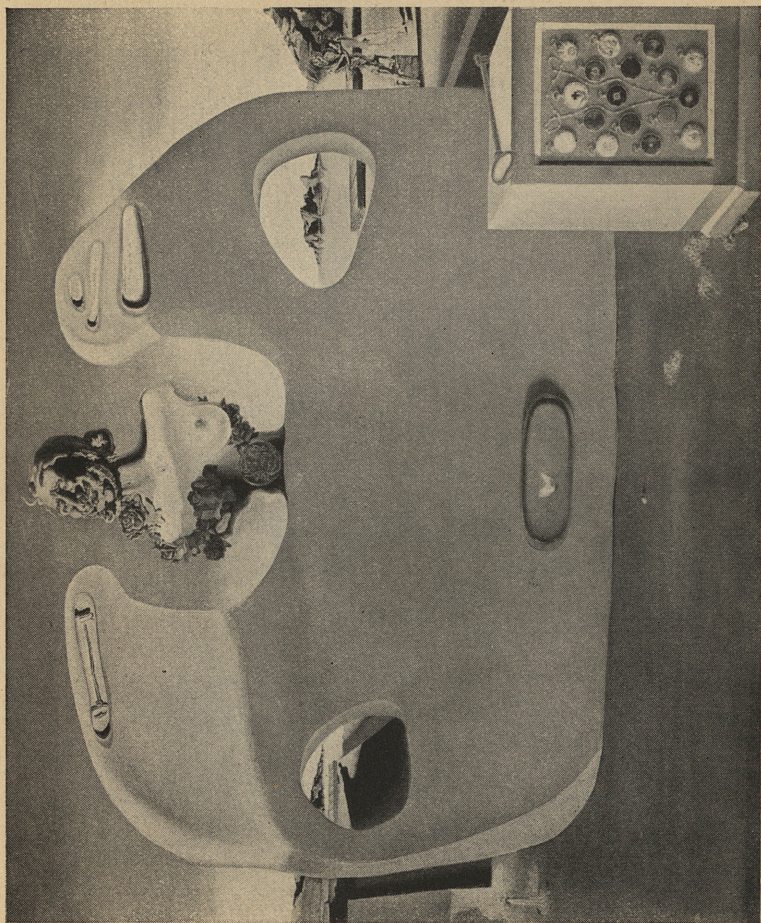






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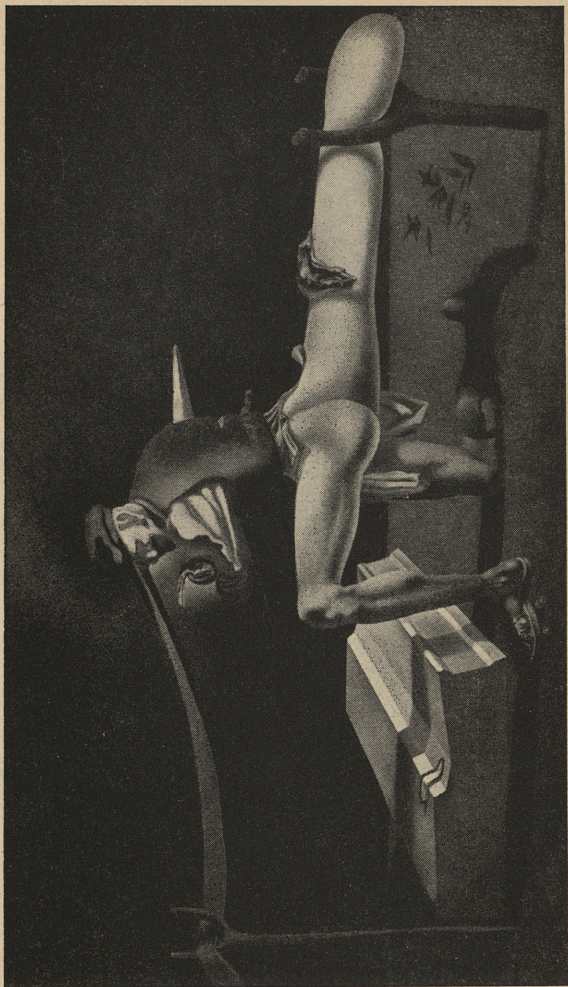




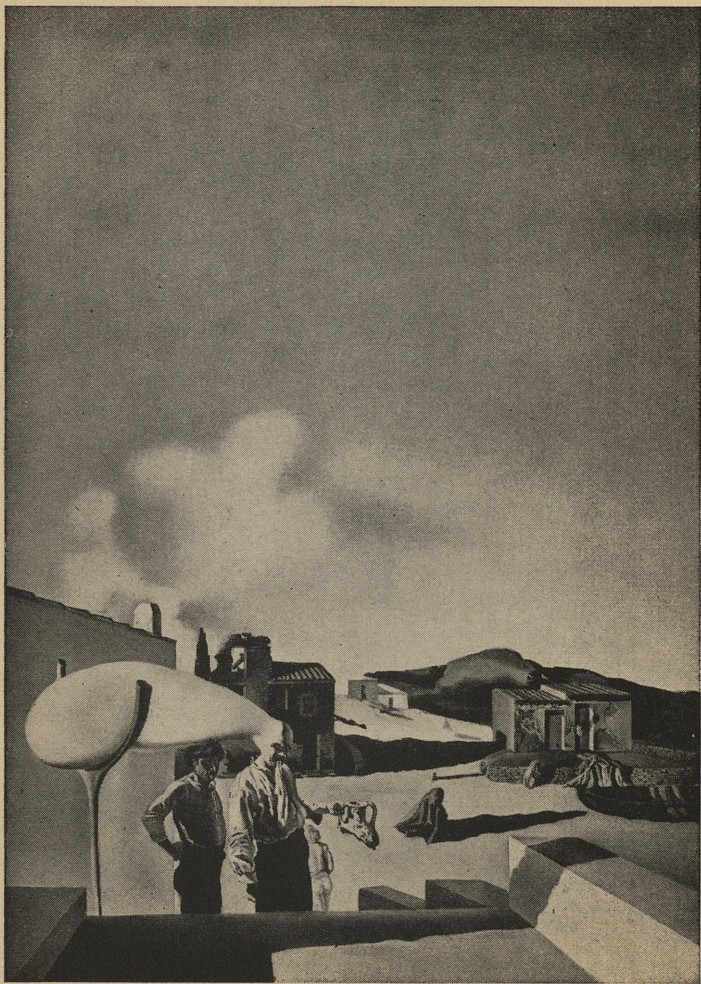


PL. 10.





PL. 11.



PL. 12.





PL. 13.





PL. 14.





PL. 15.





PL. 16.





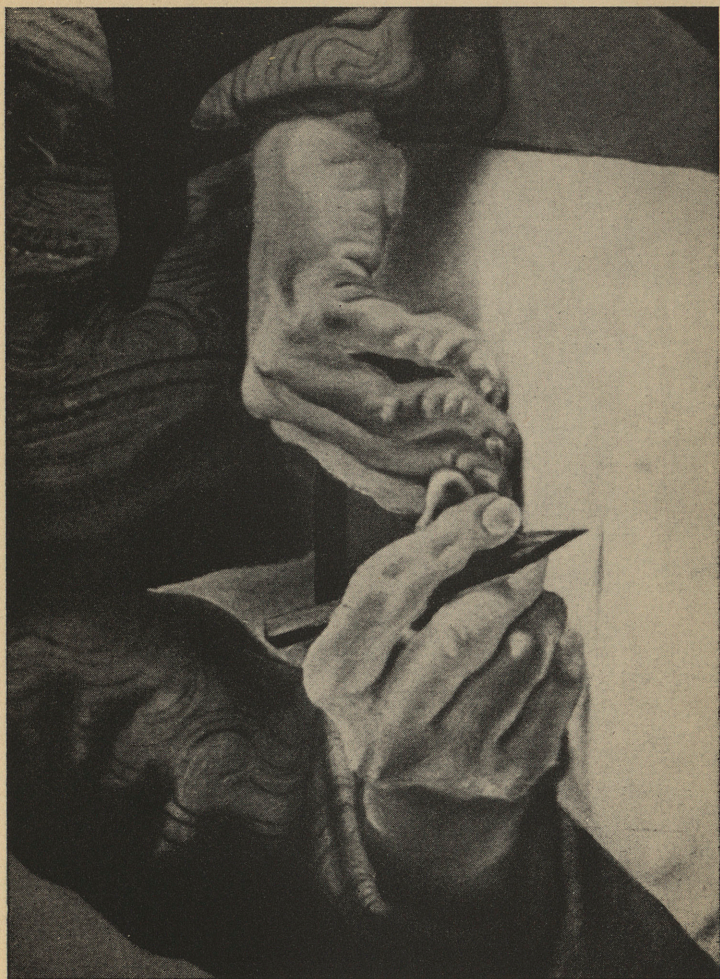
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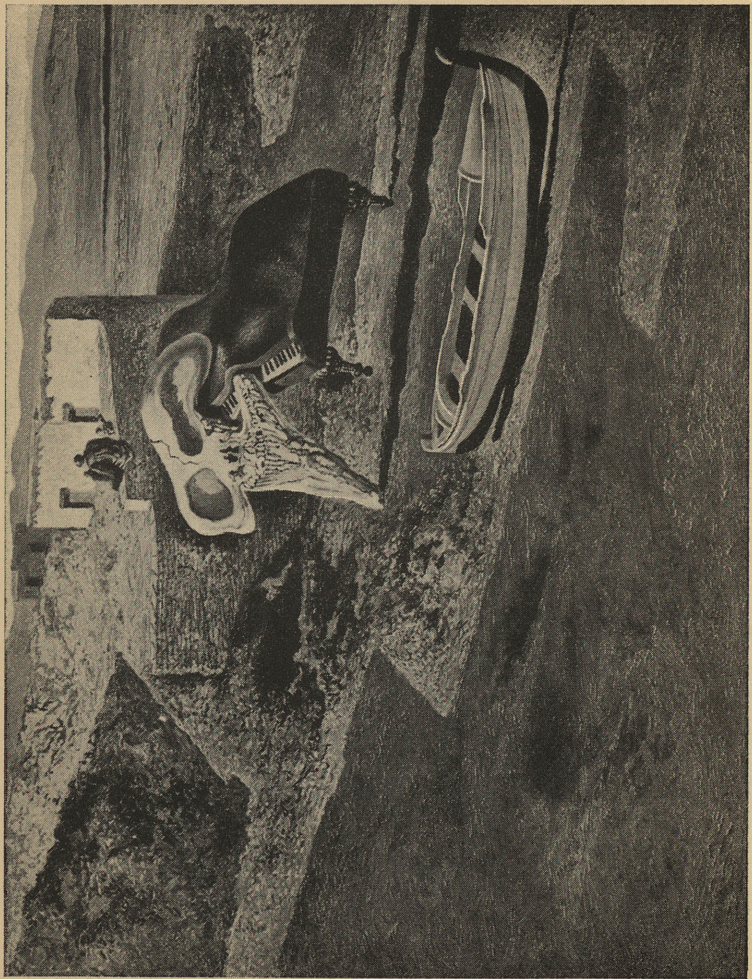
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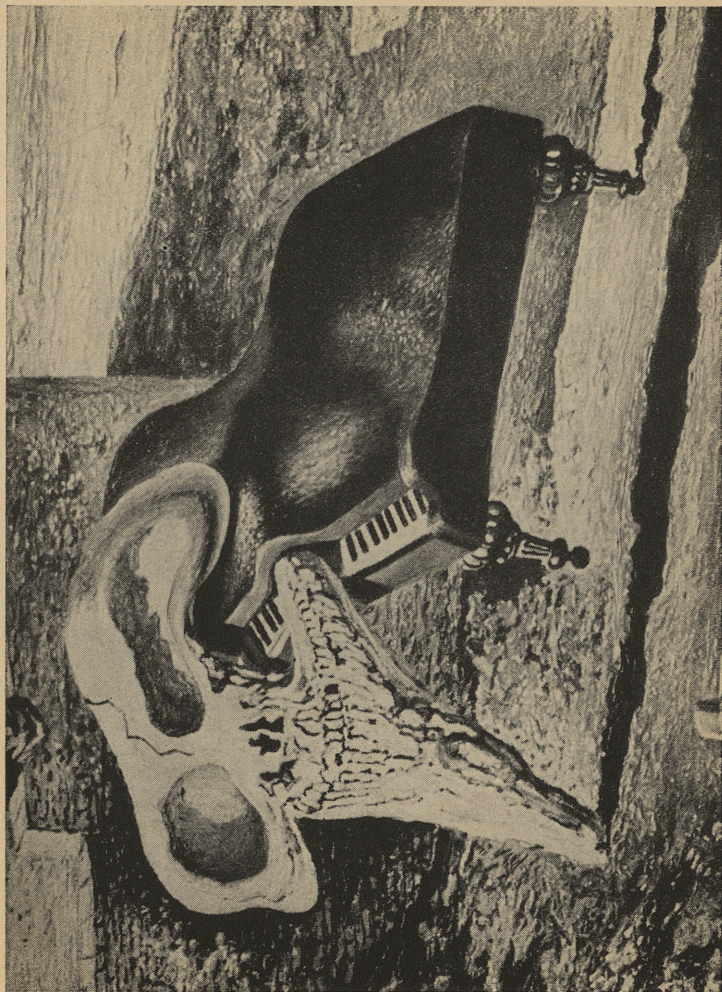
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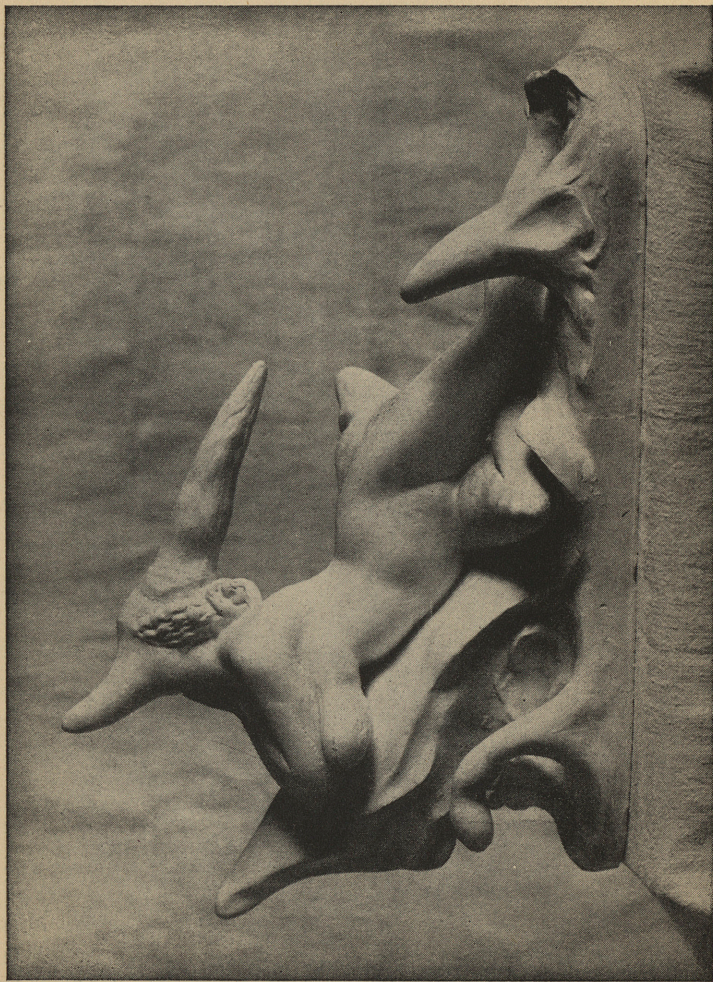
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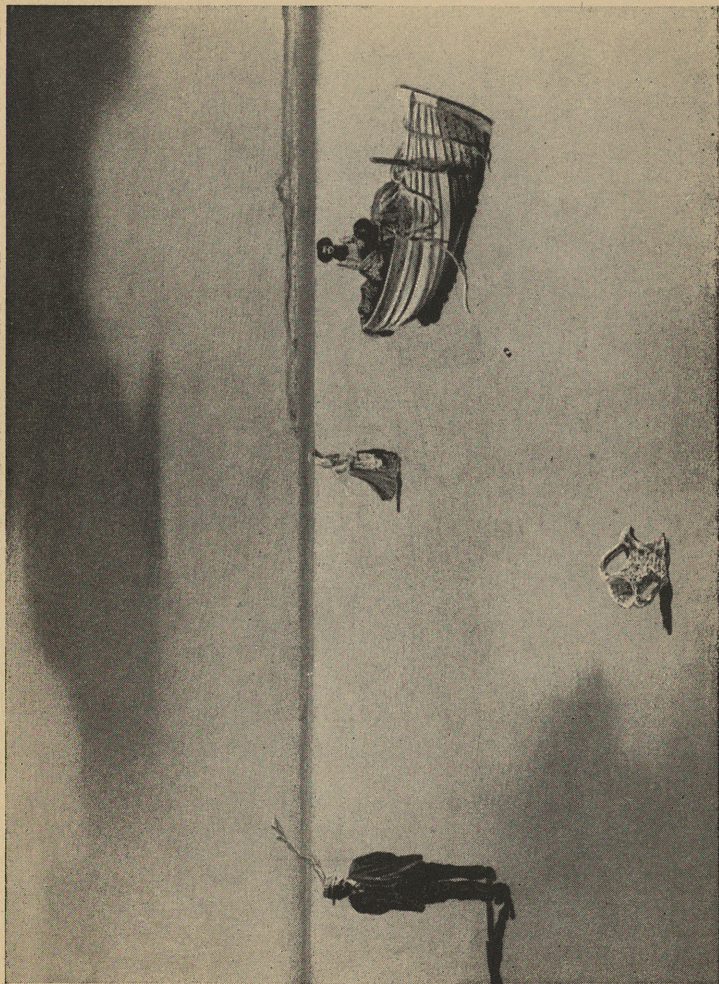
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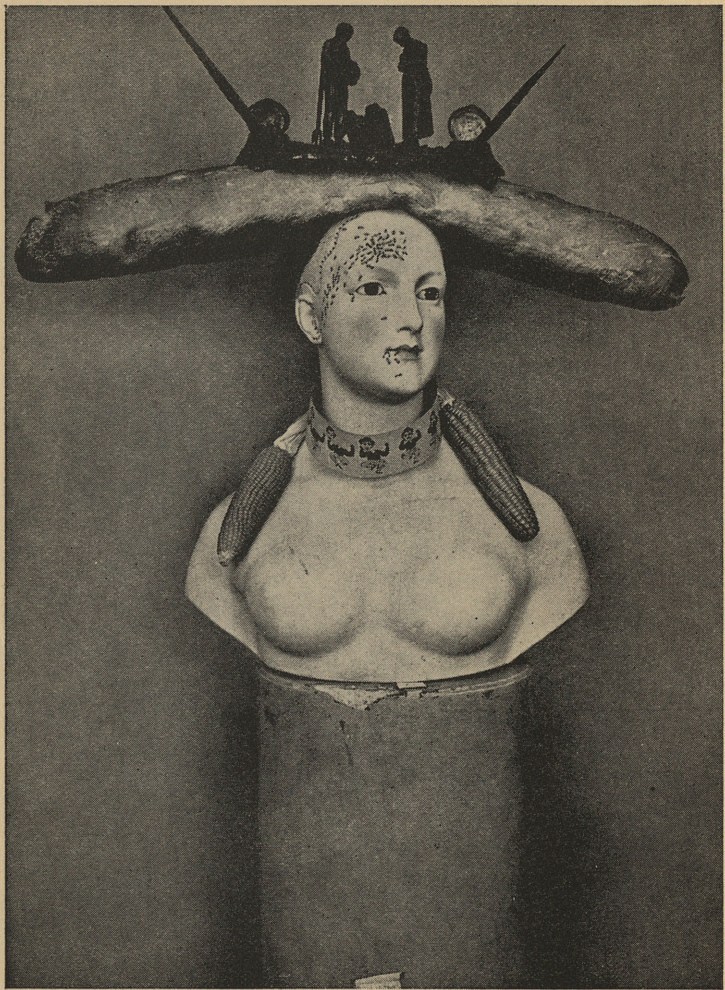
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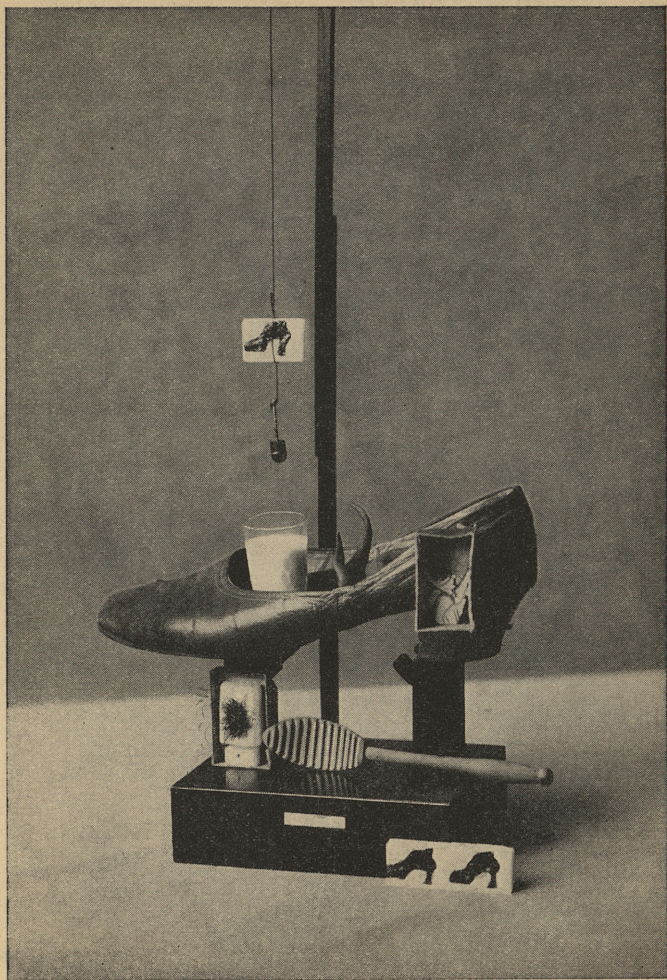
PL. 23.





PL. 24.





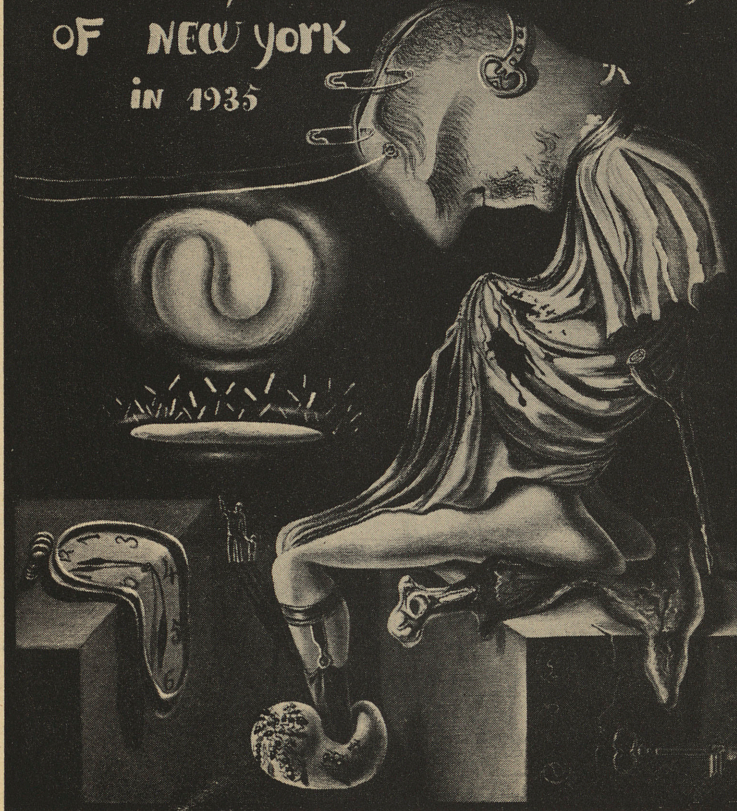




PL. 26.



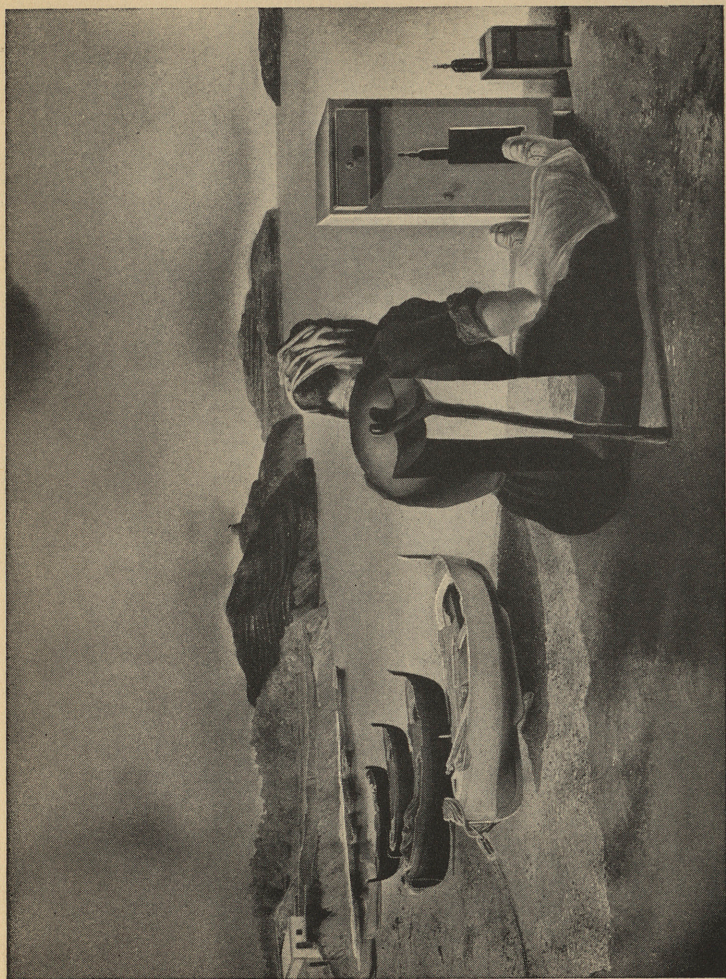
Salvador Dalí  
THE "SURREALIST" MYSTERY  
OF NEW YORK  
IN 1935



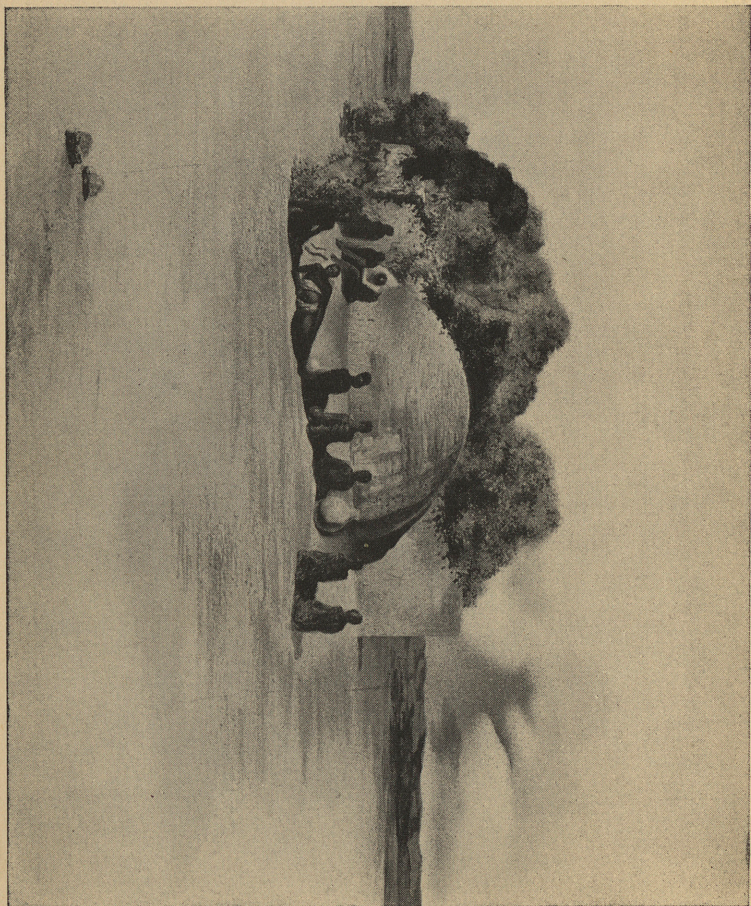












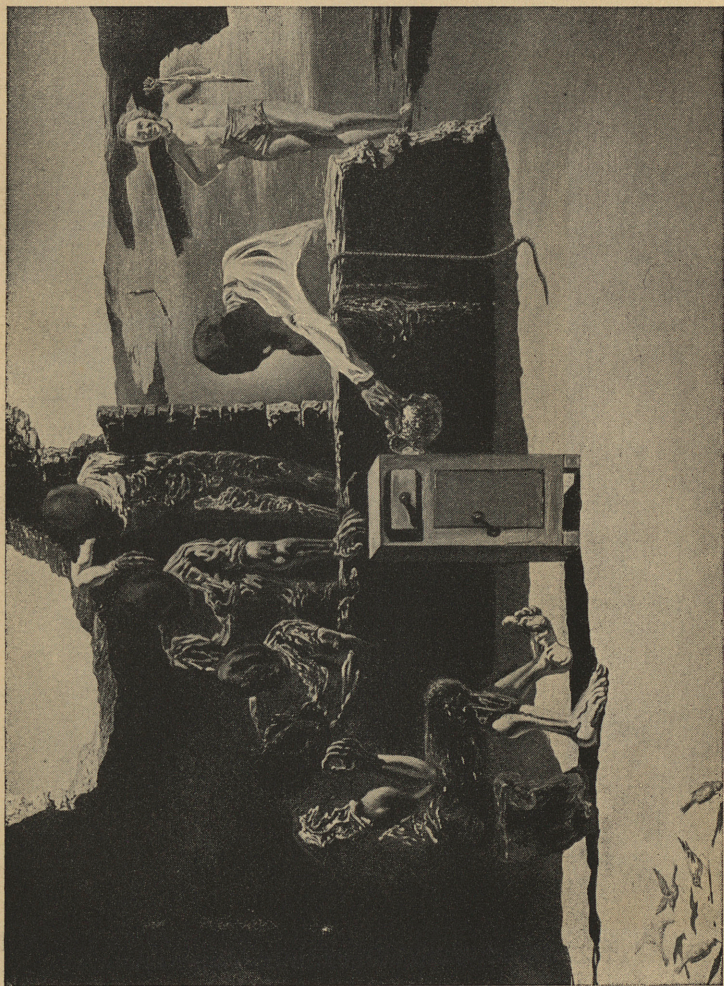
PL. 30.



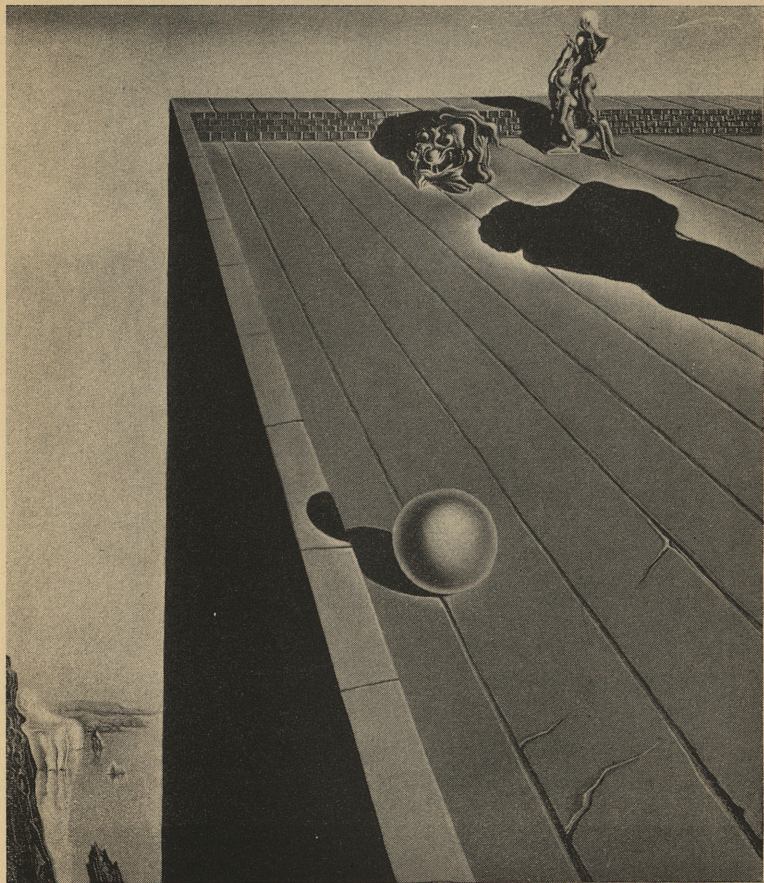


PL. 31.









PL. 33.











